A Moment of Weakness by PuffyPhantom

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Summary:

While going through a rough patch, Danny's ghost abilities begin to fail him, and he can't seem to figure out why.

But maybe his weakening powers should be the least of his concerns.

Relationships: Danny Fenton/Vlad Masters
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Author's Note:

> I want to say this takes place sometime before S2 E 8-9 The Ultimate Enemy—ergo, Danny doesn't know Jazz is aware of his powers, and Jazz doesn't know Vlad is Danny's archenemy.

The chilly air prickled at Danny's skin as he glided through the night sky. Soaring over the rows of buildings and homes below him, his tired eyes flickered from one spot to the next, searching for their target.

"There he is," Danny said, hearing muffled by the wind in his ears when he dipped downwards, his spectral tail flailing wildly behind him.

The target in question disappeared through the double doors of a post office. Danny promptly followed. Reforming his legs, he touched down on the floor of the lobby with a soft pat and scanned the dimly lit space, his vision aided by a few emergency panel lights. He soon found who he was looking for: a familiar figure, round in shape with a faint white glow outlining his form.

"Hey, you!" Danny called out and crossed his arms. "The post office doesn't open for another five hours, y'know."

Floating in the air, the figure instantly turned around and threw his hands up, like a wild bear preparing to attack. Danny was not intimidated in the slightest. "Who dares disturb the Box Ghost in his quest for the procurement of empty boxes?"

Fighting to stifle a yawn, Danny's jaw tensed, still irked by the fact that he had to sacrifice his sleep for *this*. "Who do you think?"

Box Ghost squinted at Danny; then his eyes widened. He recoiled. "You! The cylindrical-device-bearing fiend!"

Danny rolled his eyes. At least that alias was more creative than the one he'd been given by the citizens of Amity Park. Then again, *anything* sounded better than Invis-o-Bill. "Yup, that would be me. Let's make this quick, all right? It's a school night, and I'd really appreciate it if you could just—"

"Beware!"

A barrage of envelopes took the air and were fired straight at Danny. But even as a sudden attack, it was hardly a threatening one. Using his ability to go intangible, Danny remained where he stood and waited until the last envelope floated gently down and landed quietly by his feet. He returned tangible and sighed, glancing at the piles of mail strewn all over floor. "Okay. The postal workers are *not* gonna be happy about that."

Box Ghost pointed a finger at him. "You will not get the best of me this time, for I am the all-formidable Box Ghost! Heed my warning, lest I confine you within my corrugated cardboard box of terror!"

"Ugh, I don't have time for this," Danny mumbled, grabbing the Fenton Thermos strapped to his waist.

"No! You will not contain me within your cylindrical device again!" Box Ghost yelled out and flew over the counters.

"Oh no you don't—get back here!" Danny chased after him in the air. He found the ghost hovering over a pile of mailing supplies. With a wave of his hand, Box Ghost deployed them towards Danny. Danny raised his arm and summoned a sphere of ecto energy to protect him from the assault. Packaging tape, rolls of bubble wrap, and permanent markers bounced off his shield before it dissipated—*not* by his command. He dropped his hand in disbelief, snapping his eyes down to it. "Crud. *This* again?"

"You have made a great mistake confronting me. Do you not recall who you are challenging?" Box Ghost exclaimed, bringing Danny's focus back to him.

“How could I forget,” he grumbled and prepared to fire a glob of ectoplasm, planning to stick Box Ghost to the wall. But his vision became blurry, and he missed. Danny blinked, attempting to disperse the cloudiness in his eyes, and he fired again. Also a miss. The floor, walls, and ceiling were painted green as Box Ghost continuously dodged every one of his projectiles, each one getting smaller in size than the last. Danny scowled. “C’mon, Danny. Get a grip.”

“Ha! Now do you understand? You cannot defeat me!” Box Ghost boasted from above.

Patience quickly waning, Danny glowered at his enemy and mustered the energy to fire a beam from his palm, taking a gamble with his aim. Besides Ghost Box’s pained scream—indicating a hit—a loud buzzing filled the room. Danny flinched and shielded his eyes when a flash of bright light dispersed from where Box Ghost had been floating before he fell to the ground. Along with striking his foe, Danny realized he had unintentionally shot a ceiling light.

“Oh, great, more property damage with my name written all over it,” he said bitterly and directed himself towards Box Ghost. Just as Danny was about to move, he pulled back with a start as a loud pop went off from the fluorescent tube that he’d struck. Sparks flew. Within a split-second, Danny saw fire.

Box Ghost gasped and stood from where he landed. “Fire! Flee for your afterlives!” he cried out and made a hasty retreat, flying right through the nearest wall.

“Hey! I’m not done with you—” Danny yelled, automatically starting to give chase when flaming molten droplets from the ceiling fell in front of him, cutting him off. The trickling flames landed on large bags of foam peanuts on the ground. They ignited instantly. Danny inhaled sharply, wincing from a harsh smell and drawing back. “Oh no.”

Box Ghost all but forgotten, his body moved on its own. He aimed his hand at the busted tube, intending to extinguish the initial source of flames with a shot of ectoplasm. Nothing came out.

“Come on, *come on*.” Danny grimaced, breaking into a sweat from the warmth building in the room and from exertion as he strained to execute the move.

Small neon-green sparks trailed from the center of his palm outward, yet nothing came of them except the obvious depletion of his own energy. He could feel the searing heat from the metal thermos in his other hand penetrating his glove. The fire below was spreading rapidly. There was no point in fighting to put out the dripping flame from the light; it was far too late.

“You’ve got to be kidding me,” Danny uttered incredulously, dread overwhelming him. He glanced around aimlessly and watched the fire on the ground consume everything in its wake. The acrid smoke rose along with it, stinging his eyes, and he coughed uncontrollably, getting lightheaded as he struggled to breathe. If he didn’t get out of there soon…

Danny scrunched his eyes shut, held his breath, and gathered the last bit of his strength to fly upwards, desperately hoping his attempt at going intangible would be a success. Cold wind hit his face. Releasing the breath he had held, he inhaled deeply, relishing the clean air in his lungs. He opened his eyes and looked down. Black smoke was escaping the building and blending in with the dark sky. Red and blue lights flickered down a street, and the sound of faint sirens going off filled the otherwise quiet atmosphere. Feeling faint, Danny glided over to the top of a neighboring building and crouched down, attempting to collect himself while his stomach twisted into knots.

He couldn’t believe it. Not only had he let Box Ghost of all people get away, but he also burned down a United States Post Office. That had to be some sort of federal crime. And he's only *fourteen*. Danny could only imagine how much trouble he’d be in if it was discovered that he'd been responsible, even if it hadn’t been his intent at all.

But that didn’t matter. Not to the public. Danny didn’t know what was worse: the negative news piece that he knew for certain was coming—putting him in the spotlight again—or the fact that he very nearly burned

down along with the building, something that shouldn’t have even occurred in the first place. Dejected, Danny shook his head, letting it hang low.

“What’s wrong with me?” he murmured, staring at his gloved hand as if he would find the answer right there in his palm. He remained where he was, absently gazing at the emergency responders working to put out the flames. The noisy, spinning blades of a helicopter flying overhead reached Danny’s ears, signaling it was time for him to leave.

Danny found Box Ghost not too far away. Miraculously, he somehow managed to capture him without causing any further chaos. Or without getting apprehended. Now, thoroughly and utterly exhausted, Danny made his way home.

Something white in color caught Danny’s attention as he approached his house. It disappeared around the corner, just above the ground. Danny doubled down on his descent, heartbeat picking up its pace. Even though he was in no condition to put up a fight, if it was anything like their previous encounters, Danny knew he wasn't in any danger. Maybe. Though it couldn't be *him*, could it? It'd been too long since they last saw each other, so why now? And his ghost sense hadn’t gone off. But his powers had been failing him, so maybe it was—

“Mrow!”

Danny landed and skidded to a halt, boots scuffing against the cement of the alley between his house and the neighbor’s. Under the nearby streetlamp, a cat with a brilliant white coat turned its head. Piercing cobalt-blue eyes glared directly at him. It hissed, baring its pointy canine teeth before it scurried away. Danny frowned. His face warmed up. It was only a cat. Of course it was only a cat.

Why was he so disappointed anyway?

He shook his head and flew up and through his bedroom window. Setting the thermos on his desk, he took a glimpse at his digital clock. 5:04 AM. With a long exhale through his nose, Danny transformed back into his fully

human self, still clothed in his pajamas. He crawled into bed and stared at the ceiling through the darkness before his eyelids became too heavy.

A fleeting thought of how awful the night had been echoed in Danny's mind, guilt gnawing at him all the while. Then, he saw the cat's blue eyes staring back at him as he drifted away, where he let his fatigue take over and guide him to sleep.